

## Remembering: Lives lost in the Storm of '28

In the fertile fields south of Lake Okeechobee, in September of 1928, it was “bean-picking time” according to Zora Neale Hurston, author of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Ms. Hurston, a native daughter of Fort Pierce, wrote about the lives of African-

Americans living in central and southern Florida during the '20s and '30s. That year, September was also the time when a storm like no other hit the state. Seventy-five years have passed since the Storm of '28 blew across central Florida and left more than 2,000 dead in its wake.

Most victims were living just south of Lake Okeechobee. At this time (before the Herbert Hoover Dike), the lake was like a large, shallow pan partly filled with water only 10 feet at its center. The first north winds of the storm had the effect of tipping this “pan,” and raising the water at the south end. Then the full-force of hurricane winds tipped the “pan” further – and the water that surged over the southern shore was like a tidal wave.

### A TERRIBLE TOLL

Though the Red Cross estimated the number who perished between 1,850 and 2,000, today's estimates are much higher. “There were not enough living to bury the dead,” Ms. Hurston wrote. Bodies were dumped into mass graves. For many years following the 1928 hurricane, farmers tilling their fields would find remains of victims.

In 1999, the City of West Palm Beach – at the urging of a recently-formed Memorial Park Coalition – purchased land identified as a mass grave for hundreds of 1928 victims. A historic marker was erected on the site and in 2002, the hallowed ground was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

This deadly hurricane brought national attention to the area's vulnerability. The tremendous loss of lives and devastation of livelihoods led to the development of a regional system for flood control and protection in South Florida.

### A COMMUNITY'S MEMORIAL

This September, the South Florida Water Management District shared in the opportunity to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the terrible storm and remember those who lost their lives. The District created four displays with vintage photos depicting the aftermath of one of Florida's most destructive storms. These were placed in lobbies of public buildings. Brochures and videos were produced for memorial events held in several West Palm Beach communities and Belle Glade.

On September 20, a burial procession reenacted the one that carried 674 victims from south of Lake Okeechobee to the mass grave in West Palm Beach in 1928, now known as The Field of Memories. Most poignantly, pinwheels were placed in the open field to honor each victim.

Today, the Memorial Park Coalition plans to build a monument and an education center to honor the lives of migrant farm workers who died in the storm, as well as those who farm the fields today. The facility will also serve as headquarters for volunteer opportunities in the community and showcase educational exhibits on hurricane preparation.

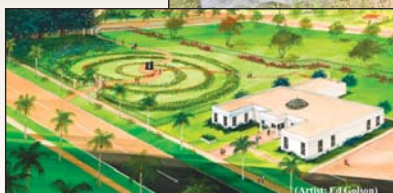
For more information on how to become a part of The Field of Memories by donating or volunteering your time, contact the Storm of '28 Coalition at (561) 881-8298.



Most buildings in Belle Glade were leveled or severely damaged by the Storm of '28.



Above: The marker and fence shelter the site of a mass burial ground.



Left: Artist's rendering of plans for Memorial Park in West Palm Beach.



## Tampa Hosts 28th Annual Conference

on

## Water Management



**B**alancing Florida's future water needs with growth requires an innovative, adaptive management approach to water management.

This was the ongoing theme at Florida's 28th Annual Conference on Water Management held September 3-5 in Tampa, the home of the nation's newest and largest seawater desalination plant and a successful example of adaptive management.

Throughout the three-day event, approximately 500 state and local leaders shared information about emerging technologies, discussed policy, social and environmental issues, and addressed economic challenges in managing Florida's water resources.

Interactive discussions, presentations and case studies addressed adaptive management of water resources, alternative financing for water supply projects, and options for future management of water resources.

Among the many distinguished panelists were Florida Sen. Nancy Argenziano; Sen. Paula Dockety; Rep. Richard Machek; Rep. David Russell; Susan Seacrest, president of The Groundwater Foundation; Richard Norment, executive director of the National Council for Public-Private Partnerships; Pam Iorio, mayor of Tampa; and David Struhs, secretary of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. South Florida Water Management District Governing Board Chair Nicolás Gutiérrez and Executive Director Henry Dean also participated on panel discussions.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the state's five water management districts are co-sponsors of the event.

## St. Lucie Estuary & Southern Indian River Lagoon Watershed Symposium



**January 7-9, 2004**  
**Marriott Resort, South Hutchinson Island**

**Presentations, Panel Discussions and Posters on the St. Lucie Estuary & Southern Indian River Lagoon and:**

- Best Management Practices and the Watershed Economics
- Environmental Education & Outreach
- Environmental Enhancement
- Everglades Restoration (CERP) and the Watershed
- Watershed Assessment

Visit the South Florida Water Management District web site to learn more about the symposium and sponsors:

[www.sfwmd.gov/images/layout/wit2004/wit2004.html](http://www.sfwmd.gov/images/layout/wit2004/wit2004.html)

For registration information, contact Doreen DiCarlo.  
Phone: (561) 799-8553 FAX: (561) 626-1404 or register online  
<https://secure.ces.fau.edu/wit2004/>

Registration web site hosted by the Florida Center for  
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